

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----181832Z 126288 /43

P R 181757Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2767
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06269

EXDIS
AMBASSADOR PICKERING SENDS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE SY JO PLO XF
SUBJECT: LEBANON AND SYRIA

1. SUMMARY: SYRIANS TOLD CROWN PRINCE HASSAN THEY
FAVOR CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON AND DESCRIBED THEIR
EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SAIQA POSITION AT THE EXPENSE OF
FATAH. SYRIANS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER ISRAELI INFLUENCE
WITH CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON AND WHAT SYRIANS TAKE
TO BE RECENT ISRAELI-CHRISTIAN EFFORTS TO EXPAND THEIR
TERRITORIAL CONTROL. ASSAD REITERATED SUPPORT FOR SAR-

KIS, FRUSTRATION WITH LEBANESE EFFORTS TO REBUILD ITS
MILI-
TARY FORCES, AND WAS NONCOMMITAL OVER WHEN AND UNDER
WHAT CONDITIONS SYRIANS MIGHT EXPECT TO WITHDRAW FROM
LEBANON. END SUMMARY

2. MORNING APRIL 17 I MET WITH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN ON
HIS RETURN FROM THREE-DAY VISIT TO SYRIA. SPECIFIC
MISSION FOR KING HUSSEIN WAS TO DISCUSS WITH SYRIANS
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SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON AND SYRIAN-JORDANIAN UNITY
(LATTER TOPIC COVERED SEPTTEL).

3. HASSAN SHOWED ME SYRIAN MILITARY MAP OF SOUTH LEBA-
NON WITH WHICH HE WAS BRIEFED BY SYRIAN MILITARY AND
INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS AND WHICH HE HAD INSISTED ON
BRINGING BACK TO KING. HE USED MAP AND NOTES TO GIVE ME

DETAILS.

4. SYRIANS HAD DRAWN IN ON MAP THE AREAS OF FEDAYEEN DEPLOYMENT, THE LOCATION OF CHRISTIAN HELD VILLAGES, BUT HAD NOT INDICATED SYRIAN MILITARY DISPOSITIONS. SYRIANS DID NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS AND LUMP THEM ALL TOGETHER UNDER THE LABEL FATAH.

5. FEDAYEEN, ACCORDING TO SYRIANS, CONTROLLED TWO MAJOR AREAS: (A) A TRIANGULAR SHAPED REGION WITH NORTHERN APEX AT TYRE AND SOUTHERN APEX ON LEBANESE-SYRIAN BORDER, WITH ITS AREA EXTENDING TO THE EAST AT A POINT TERMINATING BETWEEN TIBNIN AND SHAQRA. (B) SECOND AREA WAS LARGE OVAL SHAPE CONCENTRATION WITH MAJOR ACCESS RUNNING NORTH AND SOUTH BETWEEN TAYYIBAH IN SOUTH, MARJUYUN IN EAST, JAZZIN IN NORTH, AND NABATIYAH TO WEST. CHRISTIAN HELD VILLAGES ARE SHOWN IN AREA AROUND BINTJUBAYL AND AL KHIYAM.

6. HASSAN ALSO SAID THAT THE SAIQA FORCES WERE SPREAD OUT ALONG THE LITANI RIVER LINE AND PARALLEL ROADS NORTH-EAST OF MARJUYUN. SYRIANS CONSIDERED BRIDGE CROSSING OVER LITANI RIVER WEST OF MARJUYUN AS KEY POINT AND WERE ATTEMPTING TO PUT SAIQA FORCES IN CHARGE OF IT.

7. HASSAN ASKED SYRIANS ABOUT VISITING SOUTH LEBANON. THEY CLAIMED IT WAS UNSAFE AND WOULD NOT TAKE HIM THERE. HASSAN SAID THAT SYRIANS BELIEVED AND TALKED AS IF RED

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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LINE WITH ISRAEL RAN ALONG THE EAST-WEST LINE OF THE LITANI RIVER. ASSAD HAD ALSO IN HIS PRIVATE TALKS WITH HASSAN SHOWN A GREAT PERSONAL DISTRUST FOR FATAH AND SAID HE WAS TRYING TO USE SAIQA FORCES TO BRING FATAH UNDER CONTROL. HASSAN SAID HE ALSO CONCLUDED THAT ASSAD WAS USING THIS MOVE TO REINFORCE HIS OWN (ASSAD'S) POSITION WHEN HE WENT TO MOSCOW. ASSAD ALSO INDICATED CLEARLY THAT HE FAVORED A CEASEFIRE AND STANDSTILL IN SOUTH LEBANON AND HAD NOT MENTIONED TO HASSAN ANYTHING ABOUT TRYING TO PUSH FURTHER AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS. SYRIANS PLAN TO ROTATE THEIR TROOPS IN LEBANON EVERY SIX MONTHS.

8. SYRIAN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PROBLEM IN SOUTH LEBANON IS THAT IT ARISES OUT OF TOO CLOSE AND TOO APPARENT COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THE ISRAELIS. SYRIANS SAY THEY KNOW THAT ISRAELI ARTILLERY AND ADVISERS FREQUENTLY SUPPORT THE CHRISTIANS AND BELIEVE THAT THERE MAY EVEN BE SOME PALESTINIAN ARABS FROM HAIFA WORKING ACTIVELY WITH THE CHRISTIAN FORCES.

9. HASSAN HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE KING TO TALK TO PRESIDENT ASSAD ABOUT THE FEARS WHICH CHAMOUN AND HIS SON
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DANNY HAD EXPRESSED TO THE KING. CHAMOUN BELIEVES THAT HE IS NEXT ON THE SYRIAN "HIT LIST" AFTER JUMBLATT. ASSAD INDICATED THAT SYRIANS WOULD NOT PERMIT CHAMOUN TO STAND AGAINST EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT SARKIS TO CONSOLIDATE HIS CONTROL. ASSAD DISCOUNTED ANY THREAT TO CHAMOUN'S LIFE. HE INVITED CHAMOUN TO COME TO DAMASCUS. HE ALSO OFFERED DANNY CHAMOUN SAFE CONDUCT THROUGH SYRIA. ASSAD SAID THAT HE SEES DANNY CHAMOUN AND AMIN GEMAYEL AS FORCES FOR CHANGE IN LEBANON. HASSAN SAID HE TOLD ASSAD THAT DANNY CHAMOUN HAD A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK THAN HIS FATHER, WAS MORE POSITIVE AND FLEXIBLE, AND WOULD BREAK WITH HIS FATHER IF THERE WERE DIFFERENCES ON IMPORTANT ISSUES BETWEEN THEM.

10. ASSAD MADE CLEAR TO HASSAN HIS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR SARKIS, COUPLED WITH HIS FRUSTRATION WITH LEBANESE SLOWNESS IN RECONSTITUTING MILITARY FORCES TO HANDLE SECURITY PROBLEMS. HASSAN SAID HE ASKED BUT DID NOT

RECEIVE A CLEAR ANSWER FROM ASSAD ABOUT WHEN AND UNDER
WHAT CONDITIONS SYRIANS CONTEMPLATED LEAVING LEBANON.

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